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The national element in Polish music of the period of the Partitions – symbolic violence or weaponised culture?

ABSTRACT: This study presents the concept of nationality in Polish music during the partition period as an interaction of three basic conceptual categories and evolution of their perception. The first one is a modern concept of **nation**, covering all social strata, being formed since the beginning of the 19th century and developed in the period between the November and January Uprisings. Historians apply the concepts of Johann Georg Herder and Stanisław Staszic unifying the role of a language.

The second category is **Romanticism** as an aesthetic and social challenge that underlines personality and subjectivity rather than ethnic or social origins; as a concept of deepest spirituality expressed in non-conceptual art of music.

All the elements making up the concept of nationality drew their strength from the third category – **historicism** which took control over the culture and art of the century. Almost mythical vision of an ideal, historic homeland dominated music, to the highest degree the operas on Polish themes, and, on unprecedented scale, adaptations of the canon of the greatest Polish literature (Słowacki, Mickiewicz, Kraszewski, Sienkiewicz, Wyspiański). In spite of the emergence of Positivism, the Romantic motifs in Polish poetry and belletristic such as the need for sacrifice to save Poland did not vanish. Similarly, in the fine arts, especially in the 2nd half of the 19th century, a remarkable growth in historic painting was observed. 'Not only a sword but also a book promised salvation', writes Alina Witkowska.

KEYWORDS: nation, Romanticism, historicism, Positivism, Partitions of Poland, 19th century Polish music

In order to present the specific syndrome of the national element in Polish music of the period of the Partitions, we must explain how its basic categories came to be formed and how our understanding of them developed. To begin with, we should present the concept of the 'nation'. The modern-day concept of the nation began to take shape during the years 1815–1831, when it was seen as a political, historical community and a community of convictions, values and social sentiment linked to culture. A sense of belonging to a particular nation begins with the awareness of one's bonds with the values of a national culture, as Andrzej Zieliński (1969, pp. 19–20) writes. We come across the fully-fledged Romantic

concept of the nation during the period between the November (1830) and January (1863) uprisings in Polish lands, as Andrzej Walicki (1977, p. 11) adds, and in all the connections of that concept – political, religious and philosophical. We must remember that the centuries-old privileges enjoyed by the nobility meant that only that stratum of society was identified with the idea of the nation. It was only during the period of the Four-Year Sejm that an aspiration to revising that established standpoint arose, and the idea of the Golden Liberty of the noble estate began to transform into the idea of a fight for freedom, of the independence of the nation, in the awareness of both the nobility and the emerging intelligentsia, and later – after the abolition of serfdom – the populace as well. During the period of that famous Sejm, Franciszek Salezy Jezierski was the first to maintain that the populace was the 'complete nation' (*zupełny naród*), in the assumption that ethnic community, as well as the cultivation of the native tongue and way of life, attested to the populace's belonging to the nation, as Tomasz Kizwalter (2006, pp. 14, 16–17) writes.

Jezierski 'infected' the rest of the nobility with his views. His theoretical and social stance anticipated, one might say, the awareness of the populace. We should also mention the concept of Herder, which affirmed the unifying role of language (*Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache*, 1770, see Herder, 1784–1791) as an attribute of the idea of the nation. For Stanisław Staszic, too, language formed the basis of a social community. He wrote that language allowed people to collect everything related to the nation and to save it from oblivion. Herder accentuated the role of folklore, of common song, and he published *Alte Volkslieder* and *Volkslieder*,[1] which emphasised the fundamental role of the common folk and was reflected in the idea of national culture, including music. Bohdan Pociej added that of crucial significance to the concept of the nation, besides a community of language, culture, tradition and territory, was the metaphor of roots. That relates to spiritual culture, which Pociej (2002, pp. 235–236) compares to the tangled shared roots of trees growing along paths in the Tatra Mountains.

So modern-day ideas of the nation and nationality arose and developed in response to the aspirations to democracy which began to take shape in the awareness of society – to mention but the moral seal imparted to that awareness by the Third of May Constitution. Those ideas were essentially formed in the domain of sociology. But the criteria of nationality vary a great deal, from the purely geographic or ethnic, through the political, social or structural, to the voluntary. The purely ethnic criterion could have introduced the controversial idea of exclusivity, reflected in some sense in Wagner's considerations on *Judenthum in der Musik*. Yet many scholars have emphasised the common espousal of a national idea rather than biology as the criterion of nationality.

The concept of the nation as a political community was genetically linked to French Enlightenment thinking, whereas the idea of the nation as a community of culture derived from German romanticism, as Maurycy Mochnacki (1830) asserted in the *Kurier Polski*. Here we approach the second category of fundamental

[1] Collected in Herder, *Stimmen der Völker*, 1807.

importance to the syndrome of nationality. The current of romanticism as an aesthetic and social challenge splendidly accounted for and harmonised with the aspiration to freedom, negated the reality to which it could not be reconciled, and showed the depth and strength of emotion, the role of personality, and not ethnic or social belonging, closely allied to the national idea, identified with freedom.

In relation to music, we can recall, after Paul Henry Lang (1941), that a romantic attitude is a timeless phenomenon. In the sense of a surge towards the new, it precedes, for example, classicism, as exemplified by the *Sturm und Drang* period and *Empfindsamer Stil*, which were followed by the style of moderation and classical maturity. During the nineteenth century, the romantic attitude became distinctly intensified, reigning above all in music throughout that century as neo- or post-romanticism, despite the appearance of the realist current after 1848, and its echoes could still be detected in symbolism, impressionism and expressionism. Romanticism corresponded to music as a notionless art, expressing the deepest sphere of spirituality, placed at the pinnacle of the hierarchy of the arts. Maciej Jabłoński, in the article 'Nowa muzykologia?', referring to Mendelssohn's *Songs without Words*, writes that 'in some crucial situations, concerning the notions of value or meaning, linguistic communication is ineffective. Words are unclear, and their meaning is elusive [...]. Music, meanwhile, speaks and appeals to a certain community of feelings that are so fundamental that they are comprehensible' – in the realm of a given culture, we would add today. As Lawrence Kramer (1992, p. 7) states: 'consistent with nineteenth-century valuations, as well as with traditional poetic figures, music holds the superior position'. The community of feelings to which music is orientated cannot be regarded as absolutely unambiguous, but it should be stressed that music – crucially – can still act when words have lost their power, since it has the most emotional way of expressing, far richer than language. This idea was beautifully captured by Władysław Ordon (1872, p. 327): 'Music is the natural complement to poetry, as it never ceases to be the word of people, yet begins to be the word of angels.' Hegel and Schopenhauer, however, regarded poetry as the supreme art form, understanding it as the language of metaphor, symbol and expression, raising us to infinity. One way or another, the beauty of both art forms lies in their admirable ambiguity. Romanticism refers to the close links between the poetical word and music in the aspect and the dimension of subjectivity and of raising oneself in art to the absolute. Romanticism had a great influence. It shaped culture understood in broad terms as a set of intellectual, aesthetic and social values, moral and legal norms, and behaviour patterns. Culture is a system of autotelic values orientated inwards to themselves, but at the same time it is a powerful means of communication. It is in social interaction that those values and meanings are conveyed by means of symbols.

All the elements of the emerging syndrome of nationality took their strength from historicism, from a return to the past of the nation – besides turning to fable, legend and the supernature world. It was above all German aestheticians, adherents of romanticism, who inspired the return to history. Polish writers turned to the national heritage and to history in order to draw from them faith in the greatness of the nation, hope for the future, impulses to action and spiritual strength. The enslaved society reached back with its historical memory above

all to the great military triumphs, such as John III Sobieski's victory at Vienna, especially since it was of universal, European significance. Yet political community and independence had to be forgotten, since the two insurrections brought increasing repression. A campaign of Germanisation was waged in two of the three partitions of Poland, but during the 1860s Galicia gained autonomy. Following the November Uprising, there were just two functioning scholarly institutions in Warsaw: the Botanical Gardens and the Astronomical Observatory, and the Polish language in the Russian partition united believers only in churches and was allowed in theatres. The Warsaw Institute of Music was not founded, from a social initiative, until 1861, after the Main School of Music had been closed for 30 years. Following the January Uprising, the nation was plunged into mourning, manifested even in black dress among women. But the turn to historicism and to legends made an impression on the whole of our culture during the nineteenth century. History became an indisputable value of the nation. A true Pole was someone who refused to agree to the loss of independence and believed in a heroic and patriotic stance. The awareness of Poles was marked by a vision of the ideal romantic-historical homeland, which we may call, after Witkowska, 'mythical', to which Poles were made accustomed by culture. Despite the appearance of the strand of realism and the idea of positivism, the whole of literature and art was characterised by the summoning of a national topos, of the romantic gestures of martyrdom, and possibly, as Grażyna Borkowska (2008, p. 28) puts it, the 'intimisation' of history during the last decades of the nineteenth century; that is, considering history within the domain of human life, but still as a dimension stirring people to action.[2] She calls the historicism in Polish literature 'imprisonment in history and Polishness', which manifested itself also in the literature of the positivists and, after the trauma of the defeat of the 1863 uprising, even evoked the idea of sacrifice 'on the path to the future, in the glow of the dawn, in the flames of sacrifice', as Eliza Orzeszkowa worded it in *On the Niemen* (Borkowska, 2008, p. 23), so before turning to the theme of the January Uprising in *Gloria victis*. Critics and writers formed the ideological-national attitudes of both the creators and the receivers of art, which became a political matter.

In poetry and song, love of the homeland was eulogised as the supreme sentiment, most often combined with love for one's sweetheart, to whom an insurgent had to bid farewell, who yearned and waited or cried for him, because the homeland demanded a sacrifice in blood. The scene of an insurgent bidding farewell and being greeted upon his return was painted by Artur Grottger, the 'poet of the 1863 uprising', as Stanisław Tarnowski (1892) dubbed him in the essay 'Chopin – Grottger'. One might just cite a few of Moniuszko's songs: 'Chorągiewka' [The ensign], attached to the weapon of a loved one setting off 'to battle', and 'Czarny krzyżyk' [The black cross], given to a sweetheart, which later appeared on an insurgent's grave. 'Stary kapral' [The old corporal], to words by Pierre-Jean Béranger, sings: 'Naprzód, wiara! / Iść przytomnie, / Tylko wara, / Płakać po

[2] The author refers to Czesław Miłosz's reflections on historicism in Polish literature in 'O autonomii polskiej literatury' [On the autonomy of Polish literature]. *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 2002/18.

mnie!' ('Conscrits au pas; / Ne pleurez pas / Ne pleurez pas; / Marchez au pas'), and in Moniuszko's opera *Straszny dwór* [*The Haunted Manor*], in the polonaise, one had to 'Na skinienie oddać krew' ('Be prepared [one's] blood to shed'). This instrumentalisation of the arts for political purposes found its supreme poetic dimension and exemplar in Adam Mickiewicz's *Dziady* [*Forefathers' Eve*], in Gustaw's metamorphosis into Konrad, in the annihilation of a character with the dimension of personal experiences and the birth of a political figure acting in the name of the nation, the homeland. The 'vampiric' demand for blood to be shed for the homeland may have lost the gravity of the supreme sacrifice and acquired a slightly ironic tone when the Polish legions sang 'Jak to na wojence ładnie / Kiedy ułan z konia spadnie / Koledzy go nie żałują / Jeszcze końmi go tratują' ('In the fervour of the battle / Lancers jolted from the saddle / Comrades still show no remorse, as / They get trampled by the horses'.

Great significance and wide social reception was enjoyed by the fine arts, especially painting. Its subject matter revolved around beautiful Polish landscapes, everyday life, images of the Polish countryside, depicted with a touch of melancholy, and also psychological portraits, but particularly noteworthy are historical-genre painting (Józef Simmler) and historical-battle painting portraying battles between Cossacks and Tatars (Józef Brandt), the legends of Napoleon and of the uprisings (Ludomir Benedyktowicz, an 1863 insurgent and landscape artist; Władysław Rossowski, *Skazana* [Condemned], 1880; *Przed więzieniem* [In front of the gaol], 1863, 1886; *Na grobie powstańca* [At the insurgent's grave], 1887; also Juliusz and Wojciech Kossak) and great events from Polish history (Jan Matejko, *Hołd pruski* [The Prussian tribute] *Grunwald*, *Zwycięstwo Jana Sobieskiego pod Wiedniem* [The victory of John Sobieski at Vienna], *Kazanie Skargi* [A sermon by Skarga], and also the Racławice Panorama produced in Lviv between 1892 and 1894 by Wojciech Kossak, Jan Styka and others for the centenary of the Kościuszko Uprising, and other panoramas displayed in Warsaw), to perpetuate the glory of Polish history. In novels, it was presented and extolled by Henryk Sienkiewicz, who even turned to distorting the historical truth for the fortification of hearts. The treatment of Poland as a bulwark of Christendom gave rise to exotic paintings on historical subjects, and Sarmatism, the myth of the glorious past, the love of native culture and the family nest, fulfilled important patriotic functions. One might add that the heyday of Polish art under the sway of symbolism and expressionism (Józef Fałat, Leon Wyczółkowski, Jacek Malczewski and Stanisław Wyspiański, as well as Ksawery Dunikowski in sculpture) did not expel historical-national subject matter.

In musical culture, one must begin with the *Śpiewy historyczne* [Historical songs] of Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, all of which were set to music in the second edition of 1818 (1st edn 1816) in the form of a melody with piano accompaniment by Franciszek Lessel, Karol Kurpiński, Maria Szymanowska and musical amateurs from among the aristocracy. In order to be remembered, ingrained in the hearts of the broad masses of society, they were to be sung, which underscored their importance and universality. They presented the heroes of Polish history, from 'Bogurodzica', the Piast rulers and the coronation of King Boleslaus the Brave [Bolesław Chrobry], to the death of Prince Józef Poniatowski in 1813. They became

a catechism of patriotism for the entire century. Moniuszko admitted that he had sung them as a little child, and they were also performed in the milieu of the Chopin family and in most urban homes. Then came a variety of patriotic songs (up to Maria Konopnicka's 'Rota' and Moniuszko's 'Home Songbooks', singing above all of the idyllic and patriotic Poland. Abroad, they were read by the 'Polish colonies' in St Petersburg and in Paris, where also published, in 1825–1827, were the four volumes of *Mémoires de M. O.* [Michał Ogiński] *sur la Pologne et sur les Polonais depuis 1788 jusqu'à la fin de 1815* (also published in three volumes in Germany, in 1845), describing the Third Partition of Poland and the Kościuszko Uprising.

One grand artistic undertaking under the banner of historicism were operas on historical subjects. Chopin was urged to write a national opera by Mickiewicz and Elsner, and also by Stefan Witwicki, who wrote in a letter to Chopin of 6 July 1831: 'You really must become the creator of Polish opera; [...] Would that you might keep before your eyes this one thing: national feeling, national feeling and again national feeling [...]. I am convinced that Slavonic opera, called into life by a true talent, [...] will be as singable as Italian opera, while richer in feeling and incomparably more profound' (Chopin, 1962, p. 85). Chopin did not fulfil those hopes; moreover, he was not offered any librettos. From the early decades of the nineteenth century, one should mention works by Józef Elsner (*Leszek Biały* [Leszek the White], *Król Łokietek* [Ladislaus the Elbow-High], *Jagiełło w Tenczynie* [Jagiełło at Tenczyn]) and Karol Kurpiński (*Zamek na Czorsztynie* [The castle at Czorsztyn], *Jadwiga, królowa polska* [Hedwig, queen of Poland]), and from the middle of the century there occurred in opera an unprecedented surge of themes from the distant past, beginning with the legend of Wanda (F. W. Doppler, K. Hofman, H. Jarecki, J. Czubski, *Córa Piastów* [Daughter of the Piasts]) and L. Marek's tale of *Bolesław Śmiały* i *Święty Stanisław* [Bolesław the Bold and Saint Stanisław]. But the greatest surge of historical subjects came with adaptations of literary works. This was linked on one hand to the literary provenance of romanticism and to the requirements of that current – a return to history. On the other hand, there was a lack of good librettos meeting not only the needs of historical themes, but also those of new composers and audiences of the age of subjectivism, individualism, romantic fantasy and brutal realism. Adaptations of literary works were very popular, although, as Anna Wypych-Gawrońska (2005, p. 23) writes, that remarkable popularity went hand in hand with a few critical assessments and views that great literary subjects were being desecrated in opera. And then there was the visual aspect of productions – the scenery and decorations. This was a generic transgression, the refashioning of a literary work for solos, chorus, ensembles and collective scenes, with fragments of the original occasionally left intact, in order to emphasise the connection with the original text containing that national quality which the composer was seeking. Most popular were the works of Słowacki (two settings of *Mazepa*, by Adam Münchheimer and Raoul Koczalski, *Goplana* and *Lilla Weneda* by Władysław Żeleński, *Mindowe* [Mindaugas] by Henryk Jarecki, *Beniowski* by Franz Doppler, *Żmija* [The viper], with a libretto by Wacław Gasztowtt after Słowacki and music by Stanisław Piliński, and also Piliński's music to *Balladyna* in Gasz-

towtt's French translation), Mickiewicz (settings of *Konrad Wallenrod* by Ignacy Feliks Dobrzyński and Władysław Żeleński, *Powrót taty* [Daddy's return] by Henryk Jarecki, *Pan Tadeusz* by Tomasz Wydżga, *Lilie* [Lilies], after the ballads, by Felicjan Szopski) and Kraszewski (*Chata za wsią* [The hut beyond the village] by Zygmunt Noskowski, *Stara baśń* [An ancient tale] by Żeleński, *Manru* by Ignacy Jan Paderewski), as well as Sienkiewicz (*Pan Zołzikiewicz*, after *Szkice węglem* [Charcoal sketches], *Ligia* by Emil Młynarski, after *Quo Vadis*, a novel that inspired as many as eight works by foreign composers, *Pan Wołodyjowski* by Henryk Skirmuntt, *Za chlebem* [For bread] by Konstanty Górski), Wyspiański (*Protesilas i Laodamia* [Protesilaus and Laodamia] by Henryk Melcer, *Wesele* [The wedding] by Karol Roztworowski) and Fredro (Koczalski's tragedy *Rymond*, Zygmunt Noskowski's *Zemsta za mur graniczny* [Revenge for the boundary wall], Henryk Jarecki's *Nowy Don Kichot* [The new Don Quixote]. It is related that as many as six composers (incl. Melcer, Statkowski and Opieński) wrote operas to Antoni Malczewski's *Maria*, but a seventh should be added – Mieczysław Sołtys, for his *Opowieść ukraińska* [Ukrainian tale], based on *Maria*. Sołtys was the only composer to tackle the philosophical issues in Krasiński's *Nieboska komedia* [The undivine comedy], but he failed to complete his opera. In strictly historical themes, Jarecki turned to Józef Szujski (*Jadwiga, królowa polska* [Hedwig, queen of Poland] and to Dominik Magnuszewski (*Barbara Radziwiłłówna*). Ludomir Różycki's *Bolesław Śmiały* [Boleslaus the Bold], from 1909, ends the period of operas on Polish subjects before the First World War. Apart from *Goplana* and *Manru*, as well as Moniuszko's *Halka* and *The Haunted Manor*, referring to myth and to noble manners and mores, the works listed here did not appear in the repertoire of opera houses. Just a few of them have been revived recently in concert versions at the Polish Radio Concert Studio in Warsaw. Despite their mastery of composition technique, composers failed to elaborate original melodies or ensemble scenes, the recitative-arioso style of the characters' lines often jars with prolixity (incl. in the operas of Jarecki), there is no engaging connection made between the drama and the music and genre images of Polishness, and there is a lack of that dynamism of Polish dances shown by Moniuszko in *Halka* and *The Haunted Manor*. Music was also written to folk plays. One must mention here above all Oskar Kolberg's opera-idyll *Król pasterzy* [King of the shepherds], the folk plays *Wiara, miłość, nadzieja* [Faith, love and hope] and Noskowski's *Wieczornice* [The nymphs of the evening], his music to *Chata za wsią* [The hut beyond the village] and *Dziewczęta z chaty za wsią* [The girl from the hut beyond the village], Kraszewski's *Budnik* [The news vendor], and also music to dramas: Jarecki's to Mickiewicz's *Les confédérés de Bar* and Słowacki's *Lilla Weneda*, to Kochanowski's *Odprawa posłów greckich* [The dismissal of the Grecian envoys] and to plays by foreign writers; music of this type was also composed by Moniuszko. I pass over here comic operas on Polish subjects (apart from the above-mentioned *Revenge*) and operettas and vaudevilles. The requirement of possessing a literary quality and romantic historicism, as well as nationalistic ideas, despite many attempts and fervent aspirations, failed to catch on among writers and audiences (with a few exceptions). Besides this, the battle to put on Polish works at the Grand Theatre (Teatr Wielki) was successful mainly under the

direction of Quattrini, although Polish theatres were active in Poznań and Lwów (now Ukr. Lviv) during the 70s. Yet historical-literary aspirations were powerfully expressive of that symbolic pressure to express a national element at all costs, and opera was the ideal genre through which to present national content. When composers drew on foreign subjects (Dobrzyński's *Monbar czyli Flibustierowie* [Monbar, or the filibusters], Münchheimer's *Otton Łucznik* [Otto the archer], Moniuszko's *Paria* [*The Pariah*] and Władysław Tarnowski's *Achmed, czyli pielgrzym miłości* [Ahmed, or the pilgrim of love]), audiences were unresponsive, and the critics belittled such output as cosmopolitan, despite the considerable theatrical qualities of some works.

In instrumental music, composers took up national themes in various types of fantasias and potpourris on Polish themes, and national dances were also cultivated, such as the polonaise and especially the mazurka, which sparked 'mazurka mania'. In orchestral music, we should mention Dobrzyński's *Symfonia charakterystyczna w duchu muzyki polskiej* [Characteristic symphony in the spirit of Polish music], which was even performed at the Gewandhaus in Leipzig under Felix Mendelssohn in 1839, Józef Brzowski's *Symfonia dramatyczna* [Dramatic symphony], works by Noskowski, including *Step* [The steppe] and the *Symfonia elegijna* [Elegiac symphony], which the composer dubbed *Ojczyzna* [Homeland] after its performance in Cracow in 1883, when Noskowski also gave patriotic titles *post factum* to each of the movements), and the final nationalistic chord was struck at the start of the twentieth century by Paderewski's 'Polonia' Symphony in B minor and Emil Młynarski's 'Polonia' Symphony in F major – works of a European calibre, like Ludomir Różycki's scherzo *Stańczyk*, also from that period.

Every epoch has its elaborate system of connotations. In Poland, during the nineteenth century, several watchwords came together: the struggle for national freedom, the nascent sense of the community of all the social states, the role of culture, the aesthetic premises of romanticism and the 'sacralisation' of history, and there emerged a syndrome of nationality raised to the rank of an only option, not admitting of any alternative dimension, in the specific political situation of Poland, which had lost its independence and been divided up into three partitions. An active stance of national identity and belonging was born. On one hand, the struggle for the homeland's freedom was a necessary requirement; on the other, identity and nationality were secured by culture. Alina Witkowska (1987, p. 67) writes: 'amid all the weirdness and beauty of that century, which was more "convulsive" and bloody in Poland than anywhere else, lies the mysterious phenomenon of unity in division, community without a state, which might be called a spiritual state'. So one may also speak of a state of culture. Hence the author adds: 'for salvation was brought by both the sword and the book'. Norwid was strongly opposed to the category of nationality understood as exclusivity: 'anyone who exchanges patriotism for exclusivity must inevitably turn the homeland into a sect and end with fanatism – that is what is happening today'; 'the nation must belong to humanity'.[3] We also remember what Słowacki wrote about Poland –

[3] Cited after Stróżewski (2002, p. 21).

about the 'parrot of nations', about how it was the last society in the world and the first nation on the planet... And fanatism became the messianism which was raised by Andrzej Towiański and his followers, and above all by Mickiewicz, to the rank of a religion. Witkowska (1987, p. 179) offers a robust coda to those views: 'Messianism was seen as a cross between stupidity and megalomania, as an embarrassing incapacity to assess one's own powers and a laughable salutary pride'. Chopin criticised the idea of Towianism in correspondence with his father and with Witwicki. It split the Polish exile community following the November Uprising, yet it found many adherents back home, including the family of Zygmunt Noskowski.

None of the nationalist watchwords or writings contained a postulate of high artistic standards, perhaps with the exception of Kazimierz Brodziński's assertion that a nation without historical memory was not a nation, and that 'without patriotic sentiment, the works of geniuses cannot be lofty' (Demska-Trębacz, 1991, p. 5), although the notion of loftiness was and is not synonymous with beauty or artistry. Kraszewski, meanwhile, wrote that the accessibility of music, contact between music and society, was to guarantee the development of national music (Świerzewski, 1961, pp. 17–18). So culture could lose its purely aesthetic existence and become weaponised, didactic, ideological. What was foreign was criticised, in order to defend the villages of the petty nobility as a symbol of confinement to one's own nest, to praise of common folk not contaminated by civilisation. Hence an exceptional position was held by Mickiewicz's epic poem *Pan Tadeusz*, and Moniuszko's *The Haunted Manor*, with its marvellous genre scenes of the old nobility was euphorically received. Maria Bogucka (1991, p. 405) has summed up the xenophobic image of Polish culture condemned to the national element as monothematic, even obsessive culture which paid for its mission 'with a rickety one-sidedness, neglecting many other themes'.

But was this about the weaponisation of culture instead of the wielding of military arms? This was not an 'either-or' answer to the question posed in the title of this article: 'the symbolic violence of the national element or culture as a weapon'. This was indeed symbolic violence, acting both through the watchwords of nationality as a romantic dream of independence and also through culture that recalled the splendid qualities of community in the past and the present. After all, Mickiewicz demonstrated that with a past and a present, the nation would forge a future. And it should be strongly emphasised that in spite of the nation's enslavement and the difficult conditions for the development of culture, a high standard of literature and painting was achieved, and of music as well – thanks to a focus above all on great writers, artists and composers, on national bards. The creative output of the elites did not exclude, of course, cheap sentimentalism, at times even patriotic kitsch, especially in painting and drawing, and also in music. Yet it should be understood as a category of art, and not of patriotic emotions. Culture represents the entire output of society during a particular period in time. It is culture, strengthening the idea of the nation, its history and romantic uprisings, that enabled the nation to preserve its capacity for living in freedom.

Digressing somewhat, but still adhering closely to the issue at hand, I will end by enquiring how Moniuszko should be treated in the national-historical-romantic

situation as outlined above. Presented in a *Kompendium* published in 2019 for the bicentenary of Moniuszko's death are various perspectives on his output and his ideological stance, and also on the sharp criticism that he encountered for many decades. I just wish to draw attention to one of the fundamental impulses behind his work.

Agnieszka Topolska, author of *Zupełnie innej książki o Stanisławie Moniuszce* [A completely different book about Stanisław Moniuszko] (2016), writes in one article that 'Home Songbooks' was a misnomer, since the collections in question are national, Polish songbooks, but due to censorship they had to be reduced to a modest 'domestic' role. It is a matter of course that they were national and Polish songbooks. Yet there are serious arguments for calling them 'home' or 'common'. First, Moniuszko studied for three years in Berlin, and published in Germany, from the eighteenth century onwards, were Protestant songs and then secular songs. Set up in rich bourgeois homes towards the end of the eighteenth century were so-called singing 'academies', in which people gathered to sing songs, and song collections were published throughout the nineteenth century. German society was enamoured of song, and Moniuszko decided to transfer that idea to Poland, particularly since he felt with him great vocal inventiveness. He proved to be a wonderful melodist. In Berlin, he published his first songs to words by Mickiewicz, translated into German, which were highly regarded. The second argument in favour of the universal character of the Songbooks is inspired by an article written by Leszek Polony (2016, p. 30). He presents a remarkable example taken from Aristotle. It turns out that the name *nomos* in ancient Greece meant law and, in the sense of 'primary song', also a genre of lyric poetry with music, and that was because, before writing was invented, people used to sing laws in order to remember them, as did the Agathirs, contemporary to Aristotle. Song, and so music, enabled the word, the law, to be perpetuated. This was not about the aesthetic sublimation of the text, but the role of music in the service of social order. This attests to the remarkable status of song and fully confirms its universality, the significance of orality. Chopin expressed his national greatness in piano music, which some commentators treated as a limitation as a composer, since he did not write symphonies or operas. Moniuszko, as a social activist and patriot, 'sang the praises of Poland', one might say, for which he was subsequently termed, rather ironically, a 'village lyrist'. Thanks to the richness of Polish poetry, he captured in every poem set to music, like an artist on a canvas, Polish landscapes, birdsong and people at work (in rustic-type songs), people's emotions, loves and complaints (in reflective and love lyrics), and people's attachment to their country and their faith (in patriotic and religious songs). In this sense, Moniuszko was not just a representative of romanticism, but also a realist, a positivist. And in Polish romanticism, the apotheosis of individualism, of creative genius, was linked to service for the whole of society. Moniuszko did not burden his creative output with pomposity or pretension. He was utterly convinced of the moral duty of an artist. Raised on the patriotism of Niemcewicz's *Śpiewy historyczne* [Historical chants], he simply worked, created and published his Songbooks. He employed the song types of a multi-ethnic nation, such as the duma, dumka, eclogue, elegy, idyll, ballad, romance, dramatic scene, dance and stanzaic song, taking account of various degrees of difficulty to the voice part and accompaniment. He also wrote songs in

which he rose to the heights of poetry by Mickiewicz, Kochanowski and Goethe and showed great artistry, just as he became renowned for crafting orchestral Polish dances – mazurs and polonaises – and in genre scenes emanating Polish customs in his operas, in which he charmed audiences with the melodiousness of arias and ensembles. He regarded song as a supreme social and artistic good, which spoke to everyone. In their analyses, music critics have considered the various degrees of accessibility or difficulty to both the vocal layer and the piano accompaniment in Moniuszko's songs. Yet only some of the townsfolk could play the piano. Most of them learned the words and tunes to many songs by heart, without being able to read music. And orality, as Józef Japola (1998, p. 51) writes when commenting on the theories of Walter Ong, is 'a unique fusion of sound and one's inner being'. The psychodynamic aspect of orality stresses the internal nature of human awareness, as well as contact or communication between people, as Ong (1982, p. 71) demonstrates. No one mentioned the role of orality when performing Moniuszko's Songbooks, yet he achieved, thanks to such a message to his songs and melodious arias, an unprecedented contact with society; he sang of Poland, including those who could not read music. It was only after the Second World War that soviet songbooks, pop hits and mass culture ousted his songs from popular culture. In the wake of the deluge of pop music, it is impossible to return to the widespread singing of Moniuszko's songs, but may they constitute a constant testimony to our culture, alongside his operas, chamber music, religious and orchestral works; let us cultivate all of his output in concerts, musical gatherings, opera houses, competitions and festivals. We owe that to Moniuszko.

Translated by John Comber

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